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ABSTRACT

This eighth report by the Desegregation Monitoring and Advisory Committee updates information on the implementation of a court ordered desegregation plan in the St. Louis, Missouri public schools. The introduction states that the successes in carrying out the plan far outweigh the failures. Site visits and management-by-objective reports were cited as major information sources used in monitoring the implementation process. The report cited delays in building renovations and lack of consistent communication about curriculum development as the major problems of the implementation plan at the middle school level. Identifiable problems related to demographics were higher percentages of white attrition than anticipated, overcrowding in some schools, and the loss of some student records. The report attributed delays in the implementation of enrichment and special education programs to lack of consistent curriculum guidelines, inadequate resources and staff as well as limited mainstreaming of students in the case of special education programs. Also emphasized were problems associated with teacher assignments to achieve racial balance, and minimal parent participation due to the burden of too many meetings held by too many competing organizations. Statistics are given on the number of students transported, and the number of vehicles used. (JCD)

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DESEGREGATION MONITORING AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Report No. 8

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submitted by

Edward T. Foote
Chairman

and

Lyn Bradney
Executive Director

June 12, 1981

in the cause of
Craton Liddell, et. al, Plaintiff

vs

The Board of Education of the City of
St. Louis, Missouri, et. al, Defendant

Federal District Court
Eastern District of Missouri
cause no. 72-100-C(C)

UDO 21770

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION	
	Monitoring Activities	5
	School Visits	5
	MBO Reports	6
	Individual Reports and Complaints	7
	Committee Structure	7
	Committee Membership	8
	Budget Report	8
	Help from Others	9
III.	MIDDLE SCHOOLS	10
IV.	STUDENT POPULATION	
	System-Wide Enrollment and Student Attrition	12
	Integrated Schools	12
	Overcrowding	13
	Kindergarten-Eighth Grade Schools	15
	Magnet Schools	15
	Classical Academy	17
	Student Enrollment: The Issue of Numbers	17
	Transportation Exempt Schools	17
	Student Records	18
V.	ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS	18
VI.	PART-TIME INTEGRATED PROGRAMS	19
VII.	SPECIALTY PROGRAMS	19
VIII.	SPECIAL EDUCATION	20
IX.	TRANSPORTATION	21
X.	SECURITY	22

		Page
XI.	TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS	
	Certificated Staff	22
XII.	NONCERTIFICATED STAFF	23
XIII.	STAFF DEVELOPMENT	24
XIV.	CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT	
	Middle Schools	25
XV.	PARENT PARTICIPATION	25
XVI.	BUILDING RENOVATIONS	26
XVII.	TEXTBOOKS AND SUPPLIES	24

INTRODUCTION

This report on the first year of court-ordered desegregation in the St. Louis public schools, my eighth and last as Chairman of the Desegregation Monitoring and Advisory Committee, is very boring. That should be good news to all but the reader.

The most extraordinary thing about an extraordinary year is how ordinary it turned out to be. The successes of implementing the Plan far outweigh the failures.

This is not to say that the implementation was easy or flawless. Much of my earlier reports centered on then-existing discrepancies between the Plan and its execution. Many of those problems, however, looming so large at the time, are long since resolved. Examples are transportation difficulties of the early fall and the highly publicized conflict at Cleveland High School.

Other problems, less dramatic perhaps, but in the long run more important, continue to challenge all involved in implementing the Plan. Examples are the racial stability of the student population under the Plan and the ultimate effect of the Plan on the quality of education in our schools. Some middle schools and schools on the north side remain overcrowded.

It should surprise no thoughtful person that such problems remain in such a case. The St. Louis Board of Education, like its counterparts elsewhere, has become the present focus of racially related laws,

policies, practices and consequences that stretch back across American history. Schools are asked to shoulder a lot in such cases.

If many people think schools are asked to shoulder too much, and many do, St. Louis school officials have accepted their obligations under the Court order without complaint. They have accomplished more than most would have predicted. Having now watched the Board, Superintendent Robert Wentz and his staff and the teachers for some 15 months in two court-appointed positions, I have deep respect for their dedicated service to this community. St. Louis is fortunate to have such a monumental task in such hands.

There is in this case, however, a palpable sense of fatigue. Now nine years old, and perhaps still quite young as such cases go, the case casts a shadow over all involved, whatever their formal legal positions. It is a shadow that depresses many, angers others, diverts energies, and fosters endless uncertainties. Students leave. Teachers leave. Parents stop attending meetings. Resignation replaces commitment. Administrators' eyes glaze at yet another deposition or court report. Incalculable hours are spent in service to the case.

Reasonable alternatives to this way of resolving human conflict are, therefore, naturally appealing. This Court's order (paragraph 12(a) of the May 21, 1980 order, as amended) to explore voluntarily a cooperative interdistrict desegregation plan has stimulated not only the obvious inclination to obey the Court, but increasing excitement that maybe the St. Louis community might find a better way.

The Court now has before it the "voluntary, cooperative" plans submitted by the United States, the State, the Board and me. The time

for filing briefs, objections, and proposed changes concerning these plans expired two days ago. Even before the Court has ruled, officials of one county district have indicated a willingness to participate in a voluntary plan, on the condition that the district be protected from further litigation. Other districts, I am informed, may well be persuaded to participate if the Court approves an acceptable plan.

Meanwhile, the motions filed by the Board and the NAACP to extend the case throughout the metropolitan area by including some 40 additional school districts are still pending before the court.

What I wrote in my sixth report to the Court in February remains true today, but the time for choice is shorter:

> The people of Greater St. Louis now confront a clear choice between two drastically different options. The wise exercise of that choice is of immense consequence, not only to hundreds of thousands of children and their parents, but to the entire community.
>
> One option is to follow the familiar road travelled by so many other cities for a quarter of a century, and by the St. Louis Board of Education itself for eight years. It is the road of strenuous contest in court ....
>
> ---
>
> The other option is to complete the voluntary desegregation process begun by this Court last May. That process still might result in a sensible educational plan that could be adopted quickly, end this case for all concerned, expand educational choices for all children in a way consistent with the Constitution - and all by multiplying choices to be made freely, not by coercion.

I remain convinced that necessary components of <u>any</u> effective cooperative plan are a phased withdrawal from legal battle and protection from the lawsuit for participating districts. The public officials of the State and those representing county school districts with whom I have met are unanimous in that view. It seems unrealistic to expect

any kind of substantial, community-wide cooperation among parties that must fight simultaneously in a massive extension of an already divisive lawsuit.

Although I have been involved in the voluntary, cooperative planning by order of the Court, I am also convinced independently that the rare - and passing - opportunity for this community to trade legal struggle for educational cooperation makes sense.

Again with thanks, I acknowledge the assistance of Executive Director Lyn Bradney in the preparation of this report, although I take full responsibility for it.

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Monitoring Activities

During the course of the year, we have monitored implementation of the Plan by school visits, citizen reports and complaints, and information provided by the Board of Education (the Board).

School Visits

We have visited schools since opening day. During the first two months of school, we concentrated our efforts on schools reporting problems. Starting in November, however, with the assistance of the League of Women Voters, we began to visit schools regularly to obtain detailed information on all aspects of implementation.

We visited each school approximately every two months, using detailed questionnaires. Our first formal questionnaire was long to provide a comprehensive base of information on each school; later questionnaires were shorter, and focused primarily on key areas.

Each Committee member, except the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, was responsible for monitoring approximately 12 schools, usually two high schools, two-three middle schools, and the remainder, elementary schools. We assigned two League volunteers and in one case, three volunteers, to each Committee member to assist in administering questionnaires to school administrators, teachers and parents.

In one case, we administered a special set of questionnaires to the three schools which remained kindergarten-eighth grade under the Plan.

As we received the questionnaires, we analyzed the information, noted any apparent problems and notified the Board. The Board usually provided written responses to our inquiries. In the notebooks we keep for each school, we filed the questionnaires along with our inquiries and the Board's responses. This procedure proved helpful, not only in documenting implementation, but also in following the resolution of any problems we noted.

MBO Reports

In October, 1980, the Chairman appointed a subcommittee of five, chaired by Committee Vice-Chairman Charles Brown, to formulate a list of management-by-objective (MBO) reports to be used in monitoring implementation. In addition to the reports already required by the Court order, the Committee requested 72 others. The Board has used the MBO reports during implementation for reference and guidance in completing the scores of specific tasks required by the Order, and we have used them in comparing and supplementing the information which we have gathered independently.

We have received 68 of these reports to date.

Individual Reports and Complaints

Throughout this year, we have received numerous, and sometimes almost daily, reports from parents, school staff and other concerned citizens. We have documented these reports, notified the Board of specific complaints, and filed them along with the Board's responses in the individual school notebooks. To the extent which it has been possible, we have provided a copy of the Board's response to the individual who made the report or complaint.

We have used this system of informal reporting to supplement the information which we have secured from school visits and the MBO reports.

Committee Structure

Soon after the Committee's formation, we decided to create three subcommittees, each responsible for one of three areas:

1. Integrated schools
2. Nonintegrated schools
3. ESAA funded and other federally-funded schools or programs: magnet, specialty, part-time and Title I.

Several members volunteered to serve on one or more of these subcommittees. However, as the year progressed, we concluded that we worked better as a whole, rather than by subcommittee. Therefore, while we maintained the subcommittee structure, we convened in subcommittee only occasionally.

In all, the Committee has met 23 times as a whole and five times in subcommittee.

Committee Membership

Since the Committee was established on June 27, 1980, seven members have offered their resignations. Three, Robert Mai, Les Neal, and Moses Javis, resigned during the school year. Edward T. Foote and Charles Brown offered their resignations earlier this year, effective June 12, 1981. Since our report of April 13, 1981, Mary Lee Lewis and Ron Arbet have offered their resignations to the Court, also effective June 12, 1981.

Two members, Thomas Barry and Thomas Eichhorst, have been appointed during the year to replace members who have resigned.

Budget Report*

As of June 10, 1981, the Committee had made the following expenditures:

* This represents the last budget report before the Chairman's and Vice-Chairman's resignation.

	Expenditures To Date	Uncommitted Appropriations
Salaries	$27,400.15	$ 6,599.85
F.I.C.A.	1,689.39	483.61
Medical Insurance	1,036.74	217.26
Fringe Benefits	1,747.24	825.76
Regular Salaries (duplicating personnel)	130.05	69.95
Temporary Salaries	2,463.36	1,218.36-
Equipment and Supplies	1,175.60	1,324.40
Printing-Publishing	2,375.58	1,124.42
Rental	189.00	251.00
Typewriter Repair	264.06	64.06-
Consultants	14,641.55	358.45
F.I.C.A.	151.87	57.87-
Utilities	2,794.54	194.54-
Postage	1,285.50	414.50
Travel	118.88	1,381.12
Transportation	2,265.69	2,734.31
Land-Building-Equipment	4,016.00	484.00
Medical Insurance	6.51	8.49
Miscellaneous	1,187.29	295.71
Fringe Benefits	15.45	7.55
Outstanding Expenditures	464.53	--------
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$65,418.98	$15,045.55

Help from Others

Many organizations and individuals have assisted us. Their help has made our task immeasurably easier. We will not attempt to name them all. We might omit someone, and there have been so many.

We do wish to extend our grateful thanks to a few, however, who have donated untold hours of their time or services, often without compensation. These include the 28 volunteers from the League of Women Voters-St. Louis Chapter and St. Louis County, especially Deborah Waite,

President of the St. Louis Chapter, who have assisted us in monitoring schools; Professor Bruce LaPierre who worked day and night to complete the plan on voluntary, interdistrict cooperation; Angela Washington and Jan Eisenloeffel, former secretaries with the Citizens Committee, who returned to the Committee during our busiest days to help; St. Louis University Center for Urban Programs which lent us the services of Sharon Gornstein, research analyst for the Committee during the past semester; Inga Bernstein, who volunteered her services and visited schools during the snowiest days of January; Price-Waterhouse and Company, our consultants this year; Washington University which lent us the services of their word processing equipment several times; First National Bank which donated our office space; the St. Louis law firm of Bryan, Cave, McPheeters and McRoberts, which prepared opinion letters for the Chairman's plan on voluntary, interdistrict cooperation; and the School Board, and especially the Desegregation Office, whose assistance, cooperation and patience made our task easier and even pleasant, in spite of our different responsibilities and occasional differences.

In particular we wish to thank again The Danforth Foundation for its generous support.

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Full implementation of the middle school programs was hampered most of the year by delays in building renovations and lack of consistent communication about curricular developments.

Building renovations created noise and some disruption of classes. Despite initial plans to complete all renovations by January 1, 1981, delays hampered timely implementation of home economics, industrial arts and science laboratories at most schools. By mid-April, we noted that 16 of the 24 middle schools (23 in the original Plan and one more added) had their home economics programs, 13 their industrial arts labs, and eight their science labs. We noted, however, that some middle school students would not have (and have not had) an opportunity to work in a home economics, industrial arts or science laboratory this year.

Renovations also contributed to overcrowding in several middle schools. The Board said it had planned for a one-room to one room conversion from elementary schools to middle schools, but that did not provide enough space for the specialized offerings of the middle school program. The Board alleviated some of the worst overcrowding by opening King Middle School and transferring students at several overcrowded middle schools to other schools. Yet problems of overcrowding at middle schools persisted throughout the year. In our Court report of April 13, 1981 (our seventh Court report), we characterized 14 of the 24 middle schools as overcrowded, even though their enrollments had decreased through normal attrition during the year.

Based on the Board's preliminary projections for enrollments and its plans for student reassignments, we anticipate problems of continued overcrowding at middle schools next year.

Implementation of the middle school curriculum has been complicated by a general lack of consistent communication. While most principals were aware of the existence of the central curriculum coordinating group, few were informed of the group's progress and plans for curricular development.

The results of the Board's detailed assessment of middle schools, (Middle Schools in St. Louis...Progress Report 2) described in our seventh Court report, underscores most of our own observations: while plans are impressive, much of the work of implementing the middle school concept remains to be done.

STUDENT POPULATION

System-wide Enrollment and Student Attrition

The Board projected a system-wide enrollment of 63,012 for the 1980-81 school year. The actual enrollment in October, 1980, was 62,750, and at year's end, 59,548, of whom 79.31% are black and 20.69% are white. In all, the district lost 21.4% of its white students, or approximately twice as many whites as it had last year, and 4.1% of its black students, which represents a relatively normal rate of attrition.

Integrated Schools

In the ten clusters designated as "integrated" under the Plan, 21 of the schools had student populations which met the Court's guidelines for stable integration, between 30-50% black. Eleven did not.

In May, 1981, the Court approved some of the Board's proposals for revisions to the Plan: The Board will reassign 237 elementary school students, 152 white and 85 black, to different schools within three clusters. (The Board had originally proposed to reassign 657 students, but the Court later limited this number. We had previously questioned the wisdom of reassignments, given the obvious disruption to the lives of the students involved.) The Board projects that most of these students will require transportation to their schools of new assignment. All these students, except those from Woodward , were able to walk to school this year. Most of the students who are affected by reassignments have already been transferred once during the past year.

Reassignments will affect the racial balance of seven schools located in three clusters. However, the Board projects that ten elementary schools, three middle schools and three high schools will still have student populations next year which exceed the Court guidelines for stable integration (30-50% black).

Of the four integrated high schools, two have student populations which presently meet the Court's criteria for stable integration.

At year's end, McKinley High School, designated as "naturally integrated" under the Plan had a student population of 78.05% black.

Overcrowding

Throughout the year, we have noted overcrowding, especially in middle schools and some nonintegrated schools.

Some middle schools are overcrowded because the Board miscalculated the space required to convert elementary schools to middle schools as explained above. However, overcrowding has generally been complicated because the Board projected student enrollment by applying the same rate of attrition to all students, regardless of race. Actually, the district lost approximately the same percentage of black students as it had in previous years, but twice as many white students. Therefore, several nonintegrated schools were overcrowded because the Board projected a greater loss in their student enrollments than what actually occurred.

The Board alleviated some of the worst overcrowding in October, 1980, by opening three schools and reassigning several hundred students to different schools. Nevertheless, overcrowding has remained a problem in several schools, including some of those affected by the Board's action to relieve overcrowding in October, 1980.*

In our Court report of April 13, 1981, we characterized 33 schools as overcrowded. The Board plans to reassign 190 students to schools of new assignments to relieve potential overcrowding in the nonintegrated clusters. Based on preliminary enrollment projections, however, we anticipate continued problems of overcrowding next year.

* Although the most serious effect is on academic programs, auxiliary spaces, such as the lunchrooms at several schools, are also crowded.

We caution that the placement of ninth and tenth grade vocational students from O'Fallon Vocational School into the regular high schools may compound present overcrowded conditions at Central, Northwest and Sumner if they are placed there.

Kindergarten-Eighth Grade Schools

Under provisions of the Plan, three schools, Adams, Clay and Peabody, remained as kindergarten-eighth grade schools. In our January 19, 1981 report we noted the lack of home economics and industrial arts programs and science labs at these three schools. The Board has approved funds for establishing a middle school component at Clay and Peabody but did not appropriate funds for Adams since it is unsure how long Adams will remain open.

Magnet Schools

At year's end, the Board reported that nine of the 15 magnet schools had not reached their target enrollments, although three of these were only 25 students short. Five magnet schools exceed their target enrollment. Twelve of the 15 magnet schools fall within ten percentage points of having racially balanced populations of 50% white and 50% black students. White students outnumber black students at the Classical Junior Academy and Wilkinson Foreign Language School. Four magnet schools have black student enrollment exceeding 60%. None of

the schools exceeds the allowable variance of no more than 70% of any race. Some have spaces available, even though black students have remained on the waiting list throughout the year. The Board has admitted a total of 386 black students under the 20% variance guidelines.

At year's end, there were a total of 5,613 black students and 78 white students on waiting lists for magnet schools. (As explained in our Court report of April 13, 1981, however, the total number of students on all waiting lists is somewhat inflated because students list their preference for magnet schools. One student may be listed on as many as three waiting lists.)

We have expressed concern this year about the large number of blacks who, due to federal regulations and funding provisions, cannot take advantage of the magnet programs. The Board has said that it desires to meet the interests of all students but is limited in its ability to do so because of financing. Specialized programs require more funding than basic educational programs. Cuts in the federal budget and the lack of funding sources for nonintegrated programs have restricted the Board's ability to establish specialty programs.

The Board plans to increase target enrollment at seven magnet schools next year and decrease enrollment at three. The Board will also implement a Navy Junior ROTC program as a new magnet school during 1981-82.

Classical Academy

Creation of the Classical Academy was delayed until the second semester. Then the Board established ten specialized classes specifically for Classical Academy students. However, only freshmen and sophomores have participated in the Classical Academy this year. Not enough juniors and seniors enrolled to justify additional, separate classes.

Student Enrollment: The Issue of Numbers

During the year, at least one party in this case and others questioned the accuracy of the Board's enrollment figures. In response to these concerns, the Chairman requested Price-Waterhouse to examine the procedures by which the Board assesses enrollment and updates its enrollment files.

Based on Price-Waterhouse's findings, we are satisfied with the relative accuracy of the Board's enrollment counts and do not believe that a full audit is merited.

Transportation Exempt Schools

The Court originally designated three base school areas, McKinley, Adams and Clay, "naturally integrated". Under provisions of the Plan, students who live in areas so designated are exempt from busing. The Board also exempted students living in the Peabody School area from busing because Peabody remained a kindergarten-eighth grade school and was not placed in a cluster.

The Court has designated three other areas, Ames, Sherman and Sigel, as "naturally integrated" and students who live in these areas will be exempt from busing next year.

Student Records

We have noted that several schools are missing some students' records. This has caused problems especially for special education teachers who sometimes lacked the Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) which provide a record of a student's ability level and academic progress to date.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Implementation of the enrichment programs was delayed at the beginning of the year due to the lack of consistent curriculum guidelines, inadequate resources and staff, and insufficient communication. By mid-April, however, most of these problems were apparently resolved, although some schools still lacked needed texts and supplies. Most enrichment teachers, with the assistance of area facilitators, have fashioned their own curriculum guidelines. With the exception of approximately eight schools, which limited the number of students who participate in enrichment labs, all students in the nonintegrated schools participated in enrichment programs. The lack of centralized curriculum guidelines, however, has resulted in a wide variance between program format, leaving us unsure of the purpose of the enrichment labs.

PART-TIME INTEGRATED PROGRAMS

The Board developed and implemented three part-time integrated programs: the Student Leadership Program, The Environmental Experiential Education Program and the Pairing and Sharing Program. These involve students from nonintegrated and integrated city and county schools in joint cultural, social and educational activities.

During our last school visits, many teachers and administrators expressed great enthusiasm for the Pairing and Sharing Program, although several of them said the program needed more central coordination. Presently, principals are individually responsible for finding their own partner and coordinating activities. Some principals reported that they did not have time to arrange a program for their school, in addition to their many other responsibilities this year.

SPECIALTY PROGRAMS

The Board planned five specialty programs under the Plan: Mass Media for grades six-eight, Mass Media for high school, Public Safety, Transportation and Junior ROTC. The Junior ROTC and Transportation programs were never implemented due to lack of student interest and the need for further administrative coordination. Implementation of the Public Safety Program was delayed until the second semester because the Board needed to coordinate further with the police and fire academies. The Board successfully implemented the two Mass Media Programs.

The Board plans to implement the Transportation program and an Extended Day Program as new specialty programs next year. The Navy Junior ROTC will be a full magnet school program.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The implementation of special education classes was hampered by several problems this year, including the lack of adequate space, insufficient supplies, equipment and testing materials, missing records, and limited "mainstreaming".

At year's end, the status of these problems has changed little, although more teachers reported that they now have sufficient materials. Several school administrators reported that they were still combining special education classes in one room or using temporary quarters, such as the library, cafeteria or teacher's lounge to accommodate students. Several schools also reported that they were lacking some of their students' records. Many elementary and middle schools reported that they were not "mainstreaming" special education students, or were doing so only on a limited basis, sometimes due to the reluctance of regular classroom teachers who said they were too pressed for time and space to accommodate additional students with educational problems.

TRANSPORTATION

At year's end, the Board reported that it was using 191 buses to transport 12,640 students, of whom approximately 68% are black and 32% are white.

During the first few months of school, we received reports from many schools, sometimes almost daily, of transportation problems. Buses were delayed or early; some buses were overcrowded while others were half empty. Some pickup points were located in areas which posed security problems; other children had to walk to school through neighborhoods which were not safe.

In response to these problems, the Board made 2,241 route changes during this year to accommodate additional students, move pickup points, or consolidate routes. In addition, it reduced the total number of students transported by cab from 300 to 67. Twenty-four of these are from the county; 41 are special education students, two are city magnet school students. By mid-April, we noted a significant decrease in schools reporting transportation problems, although some magnets and a few other schools reported consistent problems with delayed buses throughout the year.

There were a few other transportation problems this year, but many of these have apparently been resolved. We note that 34 buses are still not provided with a monitor because the Board ran out of funds and was unable to secure additional funds to hire more guards. The Board has said that the lack of monitors has not caused any significant security problems, and we have received no reports to the contrary.

The lack of special transportation provisions for those students who participate in the breakfast program has caused some students to arrive at school 30-45 minutes after breakfast has been served. Several principals have suggested that this problem could be resolved by moving the starting time of all schools up by 15 minutes (e.g., 7:30 to 7:45 a.m.). The Transportation Division is currently studying this and other proposals to resolve this problem.

SECURITY

With the exception of some early incidents at Cleveland High School and some isolated incidents at a few other schools, the first year of court-ordered desegregation was one of peaceful and orderly transition. In spite of the uncertainties faced by all, students, parents, staff and the community proceeded with a commendable determination to obey the law.

TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS

Certificated Staff

At the beginning of the school year the Board reassigned approximately 1,500 certificated staff to meet racial balance requirements of the Singleton Plan.

Implementation of the Singleton Plan caused numerous problems. Many teachers did not receive their assignments until August or

September, and therefore, did not have sufficient time to prepare for their classes. The Board assigned approximately 100 teachers to teach classes for which they were not properly certified, but for which they were needed to comply with racial balance guidelines. Sometimes the Board replaced a teacher who had been transferred for racial balance purposes with a teacher of the same race, rather than leave the position vacant any longer, causing staff morale problems. In mid-April, 1981, the Board reported that 46 schools were out of compliance with Singleton provisions for assigning certificated staff.

In May, the Court approved the Board's request to revise the Singleton Plan to allow for a variance of 10% or three individuals, whichever is greater, from the ratio of black to white certificated staff in the entire system, at the "appropriate level". The "appropriate level" means the high school level, the middle school level and the elementary level. Under these new provisions, the Board anticipates that it will have to reassign only 21 teachers for racial balance purposes next year and that most teachers will know their assignments no later than June 25, 1981.

NONCERTIFICATED STAFF

Under provisions of the Singleton Plan, the Board reassigned approximately 67 noncertificated staff at the beginning of the school year to schools of new assignment to meet racial balance guidelines. At year's end, nine schools were not in compliance with Singleton provisions for assigning noncertificated staff. With the Court's

recent approval of a greater allowable variance of 10% or three individuals to meet racial balance guidelines, the Board anticipates that only three individuals will need to be reassigned for racial balance purposes next year. They should know their assignments by July 1, 1981.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Staff Development Division has held numerous workshops and in-service training sessions to promote understanding and the smooth implementation of the Plan. These included several workshops for administrators, teachers, bus monitors and other security personnel, food workers, clerical staff, parents and other interested members of the community.

During our last school visits, many principals and teachers reported a need for substitutes to provide coverage while teachers attend workshops. Teachers expressed the need for more in-service, on-site training sessions, preferably to be held after school. Principals generally reported that they had been deluged with workshops this year and would like to spend more time at their school next year.

CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT

Middle Schools

The Board planned comprehensive development of the middle school curriculum. However, most of these plans remained in the formative stage this year. With the exception of the implementation of home economics, industrial arts and science laboratories and the expansion of libraries, little differentiated the middle school this year from its appearance in previous years. The Board has said that it will take three-five years to implement planned curricular developments.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Although the Board established an organizational structure for a Parent-Community Advisory Council (PCAC) for all schools, we note that parent participation at many schools is minimal, and the PCAC sometimes exists only on paper.

Some parents and school staff have said (and we agree) that the plethora of parent organizations within the system is confusing. For example, there are the PCAC, the existing and former parent-teacher or parent congress organizations, the Title I Parent Advisory Council (PAC), the magnet school PAC and the Parent Involvement Program (PIP). This multitude of parent organizations has created the necessity for numerous meetings. Some parents and staff have reported that they are simply "meetinged out".

Several principals and teachers have recommended that the Board provide transportation to more parent meetings since parents have consistently expressed problems of getting to meetings. We do note that there seemed to be good parent attendance at the school open houses in August, 1980, to which the Board provided transportation. Several other principals and teachers recommended that schools might consider alternating meeting times since many parents do not like to travel into an unfamiliar section of the city during the evening.

BUILDING RENOVATIONS

The Board reported early in the year that all building renovations required to implement the Plan would be completed no later than January 1, 1981. However, work on renovations has progressed more slowly than the Board anticipated. By mid-April, 1981, we noted that renovations at several middle schools and at the Business, Management and Finance Center, the Montessori School and the Classical Junior Academy were still ongoing. As a result, students in several middle schools have not had an opportunity to work in a home economics, industrial arts, or science lab this year.

We do note, however, that the Board plans to continue work on renovations during the summer months, including interior painting of 21 schools and exterior painting of 28 schools.

TEXTBOOKS AND SUPPLIES

The Plan required a massive transfer of textbooks, supplies and equipment. In all, the Board moved over 30,000 pieces of furniture and 365,000 textbooks, as well as thousands of cartons of other supplies during the summer of 1980.

Some of these books and supplies were misplaced or damaged enroute, causing delays and some backorders for some schools. In April, 1981, we noted that 26 schools were still lacking various textbooks, supplies and equipment.

Several teachers and administrators reported that shortages or delays in receiving supplies persisted throughout much of the year, especially home economics, industrial arts and science laboratory equipment for middle schools, enrichment program supplies for the nonintegrated schools and textbooks and supplies for special education classes.